

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07

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DRAFTED BY ARA/CAR:ACHEWITT

APPROVED BY ARA:WPSTEDMAN

DOD:JLMAY

PM/ISO:GTCHURCHILL

L/PM:SORLINS

PM/DOD:JREINERTSON

LA/CAR:GGOWER

ARA/ECP:SROGERS

COMDT COGARD:JCOSTELLO

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AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

SECDEF

COMDT COGARD

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 308770

FOR THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDIP, BF

SUBJECT: BAHAMIAN NAVAL BASE NEGOTIATIONS

1. DEPARTMENT APPRECIATES THE DETAILED AND FORTHRIGHT
ANALYSIS OF THE PROSPECTS OF OUR FORTHCOMING BASE
NEGOTIATIONS IN THE BAHAMAS. EMBASSY IS TO BE COMMENDED
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FOR ITS THOUGHTFUL CONTRIBUTION TO OUR POLICY DELIBERATIONS
ON THIS SUBJECT. WE AGREE THAT THE FORTHCOMING NEGOTIATIONS
ARE LIKELY TO BE COMPLEX AND ARDUOUS DUE PRIMARILY TO THE
UNREASONABLE EXPECTATIONS THE BAHAMIANS CONTINUE TO HAVE
PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD TO COMPENSATION, WHETHER DIRECTLY
IN THE FORM OF RENTAL OR INDIRECTLY IN THE FORM OF ECONOMIC
ASSISTANCE. AS YOU KNOW, WE HAVE REPEATEDLY MADE CLEAR

THAT ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE CANNOT BE OFFERED AS COMPENSATION FOR BASE AGREEMENTS AND, WHILE ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN AGREED DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO LOOK AT BAHAMIAN ASSISTANCE REQUESTS ON THEIR MERITS, HE MADE QUITE CLEAR THAT THERE COULD BE NO LINKAGE BETWEEN THAT UNDERTAKING AND THE BASE NEGOTIATIONS. WE RECOGNIZE THAT BAHAMIAN OFFICIALS TEND TO HEAR ONLY WHAT THEY WISH TO HEAR, AND ACTIONS DESIGNED TO CORRECT THEIR FALSE IMPRESSIONS MUST BE A PART OF THE SCENARIO FOR THE BASE NEGOTIATIONS OVER THE COMING SIX MONTHS.

2. IN VIEW OF OUR PAST PROFESSIONS OF READINESS TO NEGOTIATE AT ANY TIME, WE BELIEVE THAT WE SHOULD ACCEPT PRIME MINISTER PINDLING'S OFFER TO RESUME NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE BAHAMAS BASE SOON AFTER JANUARY 6 1978 WITH A VIEW TO CONCLUDING THE NEGOTIATIONS BY JULY 1978. WE WOULD THEREFORE PROPOSE A TWO AND ONE-HALF OR THREE DAY NEGOTIATING SESSION JANUARY 15-18. IF YOU PERCEIVE NO OBJECTION YOU SHOULD CONSULT WITH THE GOB TO DETERMINE IF THEY WOULD REGARD THIS TIMING AS SUITABLE. FYI: THE U.S. TEAM WILL BE HEADED BY ARA/CAR COUNTRY DIRECTOR ASHLEY HEWITT WHO IS SCHEDULED TO ATTEND THE CONFERENCE ON U.S.-CARIBBEAN TRADE, INVESTMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN MIAMI WHICH BEGINS THE EVENING OF JANUARY 18. THE ABOVE TIMING WOULD ENABLE HIM TO COMBINE BOTH PURPOSES IN A SINGLE TRIP. HOWEVER, ALTERNATIVE TIMING
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IS POSSIBLE IF JANUARY 15-18 IS NOT ACCEPTABLE TO THE GOB. END FYI. THE NEGOTIATING TEAM WOULD PLAN TO VISIT THE BASES AT THE INVITATION OF THE NAVY AND COAST GUARD JANUARY 13-14. WE SEE THIS INITIAL SESSION AS PROVIDING AN OPPORTUNITY FOR BOTH SIDES TO REVIEW THE OTHER'S POSITIONS AND PROPOSALS TO DATE AND TO IDENTIFY AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK AND NEGOTIATION. WE WOULD LOOK FORWARD TO A SECOND NEGOTIATING SESSION IN MARCH AND HOPEFULLY A THIRD AND FINAL ONE IN APRIL OR MAY, THOUGH WE WOULD MAKE NO ATTEMPT TO SCHEDULE THESE LATER SESSIONS UNTIL WE SEE HOW THE FIRST ONE GOES.

3. IN AN ENTIRELY SEPARATE ACTION AND WITH YOUR CONCURRENCE, WE WOULD PROPOSE TO SEND ANOTHER TEAM TO NASSAU IN EARLY FEBRUARY TO DISCUSS GOB ASSISTANCE REQUESTS AND EXPLORE VARIOUS ASSISTANCE OPTIONS. THE COMPOSITION OF THE GROUP WOULD BE ENTIRELY DIFFERENT FROM THE MILITARY FACILITY NEGOTIATING TEAM. IT IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT AID WOULD BE ABLE TO RENDER ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE BUT WE ARE WILLING TO EXPLORE OTHER OPTIONS SUCH AS EXIM BANK, OPIC GUARANTIES, REIMBURSABLE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND WAYS WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP THE BAHAMIANS

IN THEIR DEALINGS WITH INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS OR COMMERCIAL BANKS. WE ARE COMMITTED TO LOOKING AT THEIR REQUESTS ON THEIR MERITS AND INTEND TO USE THE INITIATIVE AS AN EDUCATIONAL DEVICE TO EXPLAIN JUST WHAT AVENUES OF ASSISTANCE, PUBLIC OR PRIVATE, MAY BE OPEN TO THEM. WE WILL MAKE SURE THAT THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TEAM ARE CONVEYED TO THE GOB WELL IN ADVANCE OF THE SECOND BASE NEGOTIATING SESSION, RECOGNIZING THAT BAHAMIAN DISAPPOINTMENT MAY THEN PUT THE BASE NEGOTIATIONS IN SOME JEOPARDY.

4. WHILE THE ENTANGLEMENT OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE ISSUES WITH THE BAHAMIAN BASE NEGOTIATIONS IS A DIFFICULTY WE WILL HAVE TO OVERCOME, WE REGARD THE WILLINGNESS OF THE CONFIDENTIAL

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BAHAMIANS TO RETURN TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE AT THIS TIME AS A POSITIVE SIGN IN ITSELF. ALSO, THEIR PROPOSED WILLINGNESS TO SPLIT OFF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE ISSUES FOR THE TIME BEING IS A NEGOTIATING ADVANTAGE SINCE THE NEGOTIATORS ON BOTH SIDES SHOULD BE ABLE TO CONCENTRATE ON STRICTLY BASE-RELATED ISSUES -- COMPENSATION, STATUS OF FORCES, ETC. WHETHER THE BAHAMIANS ARE READY TO SIGN SUCH AN AGREEMENT ONCE IT IS ACHIEVED IS ANOTHER QUESTION BUT HOPEFULLY THEY WILL COME TO SEE THAT IT IS IN THEIR INTEREST TO DO SO REGARDLESS OF THEIR ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE PROSPECTS AT THE TIME.

5. WE HAVE CONSIDERED THE BAHAMIAN BASE NEGOTIATIONS IN THE LIGHT OF RELATED FACILITY NEGOTIATIONS GOING ON ELSEWHERE, ESPECIALLY BARBADOS, WHERE WE ARE PLANNING TO RETURN TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE IN EARLY FEBRUARY. ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE PROSPECTS HAVE NOT BEEN A SERIOUS FACTOR IN THE BARBADOS NEGOTIATION HERETOFORE. THE DIFFICULTY HAS BEEN UNWILLINGNESS ON THE PART OF THE BARBADIANS TO ACCEPT THE MAXIMUM RENTAL OFFER DOD IS WILLING TO MAKE FOR THE NAVAL FACILITY THERE. ALTHOUGH POSITIONS ARE FIRM THEY ARE NOT FAR APART, AND WE HAVE SOME HOPE THAT ONE OR TWO NEGOTIATING SESSIONS WILL YIELD AN AGREEMENT ON REASONABLE TERMS WITH BARBADOS. HOWEVER, WE CANNOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE BARBADIAN NEGOTIATION WILL COLLAPSE AT THE FEBRUARY SESSION. WE HAVE ARRANGED THE TIMING SO THAT EITHER WAY THE RESULT COULD SUPPORT THE BAHAMIAN NEGOTIATIONS. (SUCCESS IN BARBADOS SHOULD DISCOURAGE THE BAHAMIANS FROM MAKING UNREASONABLE DEMANDS WHILE COLLAPSE WOULD AT LEAST CONVINCE THEM OF OUR WILLINGNESS TO SHUT DOWN A FACILITY RATHER THAN MEET SUCH DEMANDS.)

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6. REQUEST GCOB'S REACTION TO DATES PROPOSED PARA. TWO
ASAP; ADDITIONALLY, EMBASSY'S COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS ON
THE OVERALL NEGOTIATING SCENARIO WOULD BE APPRECIATED.
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